

FIRST VICTORY—THEN FOOD

How Europe's Agriculture Will Be Restored

WHILE Britain is exerting every effort to provide as much of her wartime food as she can from her own land in order to free shipping for carrying war materials, a committee is sitting in London to plan the reconstruction of the agriculture and farming of the tortured and devastated countries of Europe. Men and women from all the lands of Occupied Europe are working side by side with experts of the United Nations in an organisation called the Allied Post-War Requirements Bureau, which was set up as a result of a conference held in London two years ago. Sir John Russell, Chairman of the Committee; Laurence Easterbrook, Agricultural Correspondent of the London "News Chronicle;" and Frank Alexander, a young European, recently came together in a BBC studio to discuss post-war agricultural relief plans for South-east Europe. Here is their discussion, broadcast in the North American and Pacific Services, on what is certainly one of the greatest problems of modern times.

ALEXANDER: For over three years the German war machine has trampled down the fields of Europe. The long columns of German lorries have been robbing the farms, stealing the greatly reduced amount of food they grew to fill German bellies. Not only is it crops they steal. They plunder the livestock and eat them. By the middle of last year no less than eleven million head of cattle alone, or a quarter of Europe's total, had been lost. Europe is hungry; so food, ready to eat, must be the first thing when the fighting stops. But that couldn't go on indefinitely. Europe's agriculture must be restarted at the earliest possible moment.

For about two years now a special committee of an organisation with the

rather imposing title of the Allied Post-War Requirements Bureau has been at work on this problem. The other day I met Laurence Easterbrook just after he'd been attending one of this committee's meetings, and he told me that he had been deeply impressed.

Easterbrook: Yes, I was very deeply impressed. It was only a sub-committee meeting, dealing with feeding stuffs for livestock. But there was a very fine atmosphere about it. A long table stretched the whole length of a rather dingy room in London. An American sat at the top. One side of him was a Frenchman, the other side was a Czech. There were Poles, Greeks, Yugoslavs, Norwegians, Dutchmen — every nation in Europe. Opposite me was Dr. John Hammond, an Englishman, who is one

of the greatest authorities on animal breeding in the world. The greatest good-will prevailed.

Now, these proceedings, so dull in detail, so magnificent in their full scope, have been going on in London day after day for two solid years.

Sir John Russell: I have the honour to be chairman of the agricultural committee of the Bureau, and I can confirm what Mr. Easterbrook says. But let me try to explain just what we are doing. Let us take crops to begin with. It seems fairly certain that the most serious shortage will be in calories—that is, in the foods that give sustenance, energy and warmth. Until those can be supplied, there is not much point in supplying the vitamins, those food substances essential to positive health. In

fact, we are told that vitamins without calories might do more harm than good. So crops must first be sown that yield a high return of calories to the acre, and that means cereals and potatoes. Pulses will be wanted, too, to make up the protein; for the meat that gives us protein is bound to be scarce. All these things we must take into account. There will certainly be terrible destruction, especially where the fighting actually is. So a list of seed requirements from outside Occupied Europe has been drawn up. They include half a million tons of grain seed, nearly half a million tons of seed potatoes, as well as seeds for fodder crops and vegetables. The minimum requirements total up to over a million tons. The land could be quickly cultivated by tractors, shipped across by the United Nations. The great thing is to have the seed ready, for it cannot be produced quickly.

Alexander: You know, it is an enormous undertaking—the biggest rush job of farming the world has ever attempted. But different countries will have different requirements. Greece, for instance, will probably be short of every kind of seed, so will Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Poland will lack rye and wheat seed, but not seed potatoes, perhaps. I hope, by the way, you haven't forgotten a little seed of beetroot for Poland. It is important for their cookery.

(Continued on next page)

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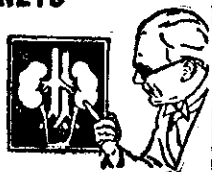
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